



Governor Terry E. Branstad
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
San Wong, Director

Iowa Department of Human Rights Board
Lucas State Office Building – Second Floor, Room 201
Thursday, February 26, 2015
Minutes of Regular Meeting

Members Present: Floyd Winter (phone), Sal Alaniz, Anna Brown (phone), Jason Glass, Ben Jung, Karen Mackey (phone), Michelle Ray-Michalec, Beth Coonan, Theresa Legg, San Wong (ex-officio)

Members Absent: Senator Hart (ex-officio), Representative Thede (ex-officio), Clair Rudison, Sherri Soich

Staff Present: Mary Bowser, Budget Analyst; Steve Michael, CJJP Administrator; Monica Stone, staff

Guests: Rachelle Hunt-Russian (member, Commission on the Status of Women), Aaron Sewell (member, Commission on the Status of Women), Bob Vizzini (member, Commission of Deaf Services), Mark Valimont

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Winter called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. A quorum was present. Introductions were made.

2. Action Item: Approve October 16, 2014 Minutes

Ray-Michalec moved to approve the October 16, 2014 minutes, seconded by Glass. No discussion. Motion carried by voice vote

3. Department Report

Director Wong provided a brief recap of the DHR Legislative Breakfast and an update regarding staff changes, introducing Monica Stone, who is new to the position of Assistant to the Director.

Michael provided additional information and a handout of the recommendations included the Community and Strategic Planning (CASP) Report. Michael also provided updated the Commission regarding two upcoming related initiatives. First, a summit planned by Representative Miller at the University of Northern Iowa this fall on disproportionate minority contact in the justice system; second, a smaller group being established by the Judicial Branch to examine directions the state should take, including examination of the need for legislative action.

Michael offered a summary of the Juvenile Justice Re-Entry Task Force initiatives, including the development of a grant proposal to be submitted to the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Michael also provided a review of a meeting held February 19 including the Department of Human Rights, Department of Education, Iowa State University Extension/4-H and the Latino Affairs Commission to discuss opportunities to reduce the achievement gap for Latino and other students in Iowa. The result of the meeting was a proposal to have the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council and the ICYD Results Team begin a new project designed to enhance parental involvement as a component in resolving the achievement gap.

There was discussion regarding engaging Early Childhood Development in this work, and Michael indicated that this organization is represented on the ICYD Council, but that he would specifically reach out to this group regarding the new educational achievement gap focus.

Director Wong offered an update of the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), indicating that last year's problems have not resurfaced, in large part due to a proactive system-wide initiative including government agencies, the Propane Association and the Midwest Governors' Association.

Director Wong reported that the Community Services Block Grant program is successfully implementing new organizational standards in Community Action Agencies at the local level.

Director Wong reminded the Board that the Division Administrator for the Community Advocacy and Services (CAS) Division, Heidi Smith, left in December, and she indicated that the Department is planning to fill this position later this spring. She provided updates for the CAS Division's work, including the development of the second edition of the She Matters Report, completed in collaboration with the Iowa Women's Leadership Project.

4. Board Priorities

Action Item: Discussion of final DMC report/possible DHR Board initiatives

Chair Floyd asked what the Board could do to engage in the implementation of the CASP recommendations. Michael indicated the DHR would keep Board members informed regarding various state-wide agencies' commitment to taking specific actions; however, much of the work to implement these recommendations will happen at the local level. Board members can best assist by encouraging local organizations to participate at the local level.

Glass asked how the Board can best be involved. Michael indicated that DHR would keep Board members informed of specific opportunities to engage local leaders; Director Wong offered that DHR would craft a document to assist the Board in communicating proactively with local organizations about the CASP recommendations and disproportionate minority contact in the justice system overall.

Director Wong also asked Stone to provide an update on the DHR website. Department, Commission and Board websites have undergone a comprehensive review by DHR staff to edit and improve information. The next step is to move the content to a new management system that will allow DHR staff to directly manage and update our website information. The Department received a grant from Iowa Access to fund a portion of this change, and DHR engaged Eagle Creek to migrate content and set up the template for the new site. Chair Floyd asked for a timeline for completion; Stone indicated the website is expected to be live by June 30.

5. Board Member Updates

Commission of Deaf Services (Legg) – The Commission meeting was held the morning of February 26. A decision was made to begin strategic planning, with a goal of addressing two issues for deaf and one issue for hard of hearing.

Commission of Latino Affairs (Alaniz) – The Commission meeting was also held the morning of February 26. In addition to the earlier report on the educational initiative to reduce the achievement gap for Latino students, Alaniz indicated the desire to include other groups in this initiative and would continue to seek broad-based participation from all Commissions.

In the upcoming April Commission meeting, the Commission will be reviewing and updating policy priorities, particularly including a focus on education and healthcare.

Alaniz reported that the Commission was interested in exploring how to best use social media to improve communication state wide, with an emphasis on promoting preventative healthcare and education.

Commission of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (Jung) – The Commission met the morning of February 26. Commissioners recently introduced a new policy agenda document that outlines

priorities around language access, public engagement/civic engagement, healthcare services and education. The Commission developed this agenda in conjunction with its first legislative event to be held on Wednesday, March 4 at the State Capitol.

Jung discussed the value and relevance of civic engagement as a policy agenda item. This issue was placed at the forefront recently at a county hospital board meeting where members of the Tai Dam community wanted to provide public comment regarding a personnel decision at the hospital and they were not allowed the opportunity to speak. Chair Floyd recommended that other Board members read the Des Moines Register coverage of this event.

Commission on the Status of Women (Coonan) – The Commission met the morning of February 26. Since the last meeting, the Commission established four priorities that will guide activities for the next year: 1) The proactive protection and oversight for Iowa women and girls; 2) Pay equity and women in poverty; 4) Women in leadership; and 5) Women in business.

The Commission is identifying bills that fall within Commission priorities to ensure that members have the information they need to advocate on key legislative items.

Commissioners are excited about the completion of the She Matters report because it provides the research and statistics that supply a basis for supporting important policies and initiatives.

Coonan also announced an upcoming event and deadline. The Write Women Back into History Essay Contest Awards Celebration will be held March 12, 2015 at the State Historical Building and the due date for Iowa Women's Hall of Fame nominations is April 1, 2015. Coonan encouraged Commissioners to submit nominations and promoted the need for nominees from a broad geographic representation of the state.

Public Member (Glass) – Four Oaks is offering an innovative program to serve children in crisis. Each child is given a “success manager” who is responsible to surround that child with all of the services that child needs. Four Oaks is using a stability matrix to determine the overall stability of the life of the child from initial engagement through age 18. Transition groups are offered for youth from age 18 – 21.

Persons with Disabilities (Ray-Michalec) – The Commission held its legislative breakfast and met on January 21. Over 70 legislators attended the breakfast.

One commissioner has had to resign membership on the Commission, leaving a position open.

The Commission has created three task forces: 1) legislative; 2) access and reduction of barriers with a focus on accessibility for the Iowa Caucuses; and 3) marketing and communication.

The Commission is also following the mental health funding issues closely, with a concern that people could end up in correctional facilities when they need mental health treatment.

Commission of Native American Affairs (Mackey) – Mackey shared with the Board that the Commission of Native American Affairs is experiencing challenges in achieving quorum for Board meetings. This is because the Iowa Code definition of quorum for the Commission requires a majority of all possible members rather than a majority of all appointed members. Some of the Commission's Board positions have remained vacant for some time because they are mandated to be filled by people who represent Iowa land-based tribes. For these positions, the tribal entity must provide the Governor with the name of a representative to the Board, and the Commission is having some difficulty getting appointments to all of the open positions.

The Commission is also working with the Department of Corrections and Drake Law School to educate people regarding the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Winter – Winter encouraged Board Members to revisit the Board's goals and think about how the Board should prioritize actions toward meeting those goals.

6. Public Comment

Mark Valimont provided Commissioners his perspective on the deficiencies in services being offered in Iowa for members of the deaf community and shared his personal experiences with other state agencies. Valimont recommended that Iowa establish a larger Office of Deaf Services to provide comprehensive services to the deaf community, and that the state require more training and certification for interpreters. Director Wong offered to have a discussion with Valimont regarding his specific needs and concerns.

7. Next Meetings: May 2015

Stone will survey Commissioners to determine meet date for the next meeting.

8. Adjourn

Mackey moved to adjourn, seconded by Ray-Michalec. Motion carried by voice vote.

Minutes prepared by Monica Stone, DHR staff